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ABSTRACT

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Running Head: Culture

Stories of Integration, Differentiation, and Fragmentation: One University's Culture

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Abstract

This study examines the culture of a university by analyzing its stories. Results suggest that a strong student subculture is frequently in conflict with the organization's dominant tradition-based culture. Stories illustrate the conflict between these two, as well as provide examples of unity between them. Other stories are ambiguous, not clearly espousing any values. In this way, the analysis suggests the importance of using all three perspectives on organizational culture defined by Martin (1992). The results seem applicable to studying other organizations as well, since stories of conflict and unity may provide insight into organizations' cultures.

Stories of Integration, Differentiation, and Fragmentation: One University's Culture

In her seminal work on organizational culture, Martin (1992) identified three perspectives used to examine organizational culture: 1) the integrated view, in which the organization is envisioned as harmonious and homogenous based on values and beliefs shared throughout the organization; 2) the differentiated view, in which subcultures exist with separate and distinct values that may be in conflict with those of other subcultures or even the dominant culture; and 3) the fragmented view, in which the values and beliefs are constantly changing with only temporary periods of agreement and even those are marked by ambiguity and disparate understandings in different parts of the organization. Martin (1992) illustrated that all three perspectives provide unique insights into an organization's culture by examining a single organization, Ozco (a pseudonym), a Fortune 500 electronics firm, from each perspective based on interview data.

The purpose of this study is to examine an organization with a longer history (over 150 years) than the electronics firm and base the analysis on an alternative data set, the organizational stories, myths, and legends that have accumulated over the years. This should increase our understanding of culture and the value of all three perspectives delineated by Martin (1992).

Review of Literature

Given the proliferation of scholarly writing on organizational culture, this review will only peruse some of the key concepts rather than provide a comprehensive review of all the literature. More comprehensive reviews exist in other places such as Smircich and Calas (1987).

Defining Culture

The concept of organizational culture was strongly influenced by sociology, anthropology, social psychology, and organizational behavior (Ouchi & Wilkins, 1985; Schein, 1990). The study of organizational culture grew as an alternative perspective to the study of organizational communication which was criticized for being too strongly associated with managerial concerns, relying on quantitative research methods, and being overly dry and rational (Pacanowsky & O'Donnell-Trujillo, 1982; Smircich & Calas, 1987). However, it was not long before this alternative perspective began to be viewed as a tool of management (e.g., Peters & Waterman, 1982), became incorporated into the rational and positivist traditions (Smircich & Calas, 1987), and became increasing researched through quantitative methods (e.g., Shockley-Zalabak & Morley, 1994).

Some common themes pervade conceptualizations of organizational culture although there is no precise definition (Schein, 1990). Generally, culture is seen as the shared meanings or understandings that make up and affect the beliefs and values of an organization or unit; as such culture is manifest in, but not limited to, communication behaviors, commitment, decision making and the implementation of decisions (Sathe, 1983). Culture simultaneously includes cognitive, behavioral and emotional processes (Schein, 1990). An organization's culture also includes the shared norms, reminiscences, stories, rites, and rituals that provide members with a unique symbolic common ground (Barnett, 1988). These symbolic meanings, which may be subconscious, develop historically, differ over time, and affect social action (Feldman, 1986). An organization's culture is not insular, but is influenced by its national culture (Morgan, 1986) and its industry's culture (Reynolds, 1986). It serves as a preserving force by creating resistance to change (Schein, 1990).

Stories as Cultural Carriers

Storytelling is an important means of enacting an organization's culture because culture is something an organization performs, as opposed to something it has (Meyer, 1995; Pacanowsky & O'Donnell-Trujillo, 1983). It is through narratives that organizational members capture an organization's culture (Brown & McMillan, 1991). Stories serve as a storehouse of organizational information, supply reasons for events, and promote or suppress certain behaviors (Brown, 1985). Through stories, behavior changes can be advanced (Sathe, 1983) or predictable behaviors can be reinforced (Weick, 1987). As individuals become more socialized into an organization, their stories become more closely associated with organizational values and cultures (Brown, 1985). Individuals learn the cultural meanings through stories (Barnett, 1988).

Stories can be personal stories designed to embellish the storyteller's identity, collegial stories told to peers but not sanctioned by management that are indicative of how the organization really works, or corporate narratives that represent the ideology of management-favored customs of organizational life (Pacanowsky & O'Donnell-Trujillo, 1983). As stories accumulate, myths evolve as composites of stories representing important cultural themes, values, or lessons (Brown, 1985). These stories serve a sensemaking function for organizational members (Brown, 1985). Storytelling typifies certain experiences as worthy of emulation or deserving of caution and calls attention to significant past and possible future scenarios (Pacanowsky & O'Donnell-Trujillo, 1983).

Research Question

The examination of the literature on storytelling as an organizational cultural phenomenon indicates a strong bias toward what Martin (1992) called

the integrated view of culture, which is a unified culture shared by all. For example, Schein (1990) indicated that stories are artifacts in which the culture manifests itself and Brown (1985) wrote that as stories and myths accumulate within an organization, themes emerge from the body of narrative that provide a symbolic aggregate view of the organization. Meyer (1995) noted that narratives express common values around which the organization can be unified. Such descriptions suggest a singular, unified culture.

While it is likely that certain stories told in an organization do indicate a singular culture, storytelling can also provide evidence of a differentiated culture, where subcultures have separate and distinct values that may even be in conflict with each other (Martin, 1992). Meyer (1995) noted that values expressed in narratives can enhance the understanding of harmony or conflict and may express values that contradict the dominant values. Groups or subcultures within an organization may have their own stories that indicate their own values and beliefs which may be in conflict with those of the dominant, integrated culture. For example, Pacanowsky and O'Donnell-Trujillo's (1983) distinguish corporate stories sanctioned by management from collegial stories told to peers but not sanctioned by management. This implies that a differentiated view can be applied to organizational stories in which different, sometimes opposing subcultures provide various interpretations of organizational events or themes.

Finally, stories may exist that indicate either changing views or ambiguity about events, characteristics of the fragmented view of culture. Martin (1992) provided interview data that indicated support for examining all three views of culture in a single organization. However, she did not examine organizational stories, myths, or legends that may also provide support for

multiple views of organizational culture. In light of this, the following question is addressed in this research:

RQ1: Do the stories told in an organization provide evidence of an integrated, differentiated, and fragmented culture existing concurrently within an organization?

Method

Data

Stories were collected over a period of five years at a large midwestern research university. Students enrolled in an upper-division communication course in organizational communication each submitted an organizational story about some aspect of the university as part of a class assignment on organizational culture. Students conducted a script analysis (see Daniels, Spiker, & Papa, 1997) to complete their assignment requirements. Only the actual stories were collected for this study. Many were duplicate stories or variations on the same basic story. Of 146 stories collected in this manner, the 96 unique stories were used for this analysis.

Analysis

Rather than beginning with predetermined categories for the stories, a grounded theory approach was used in which the classification system emerged from the data over time (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). First, each story was read independently by both researchers. Then, the researchers worked together to develop a general classification system for dividing the stories into categories that seemed to suggest certain cultural values or messages. This resulted in a fairly parsimonious set of six general categories. However, a number of subcategories were apparent within these general categories. Once this general scheme was developed including category labels, the first coder

reread each story and placed the story into the appropriate category. Then, the second coder reread each story and assigned it to a category. Intercoder reliability or simple agreement for classifying the stories was .92 with a Kappa correcting for chance agreement of .90 (Fleiss, 1971).

Results

The category system is illustrated in Figure 1. Two dominant types of stories are evident. One type (28 stories) is consistent with the strong academic traditions and heritage of the university including its connection with the town and association with famous people. The second type (30) represents a strong student subculture that espouses fun, the supernatural, danger, and pranks as part of student life on campus. A third type of story (10) very clearly illustrates the clash of cultures due to the inconsistencies between the academic traditions and the student subculture. In these, direct conflict and confrontation are evident. A fourth type (15) also demonstrates conflict with the academic traditions, but focuses on conflict over espoused values. These stories involve students or other individuals calling attention to the dominant culture's failure to enact its professed values. The next type (10) shows unifying of the student subculture and academic traditions. The final type of story (10) is labeled fragmentation. These stories describe problems or concerns that are not being addressed or have endings that are ambiguous. General characteristics of stories in each category or subcategory are described below along with exemplary stories.

Traditions: The Dominant Consensus Culture

Stories of the dominant consensus culture at the university center on traditions. These stories are about the connection between the university and the town, buildings and monuments, famous people associated with the

university, and its long standing organizations and academic traditions.

Town stories link the university with the community. To most people, the two are synonymous, which is understandable since the university is the largest employer there. One story describes how the two are symbolically linked through Jesse Hall, the main administration building.

> Here's one that all freshmen hear on the Summer Welcome tour of campus while walking along the quad past Jesse Hall: If you shoot a bullet through the key hole from inside Jesse Hall it would go through the key hole of the old courthouse in downtown Columbia.

Stories about buildings and monuments reflect the university as one of the country's original land grant colleges with quite a history. For example, while Switzler Hall was built just <u>after</u> the Civil War, it abounds with myths concerning its use as a Civil War hospital. There are stories about the two stone lions outside the Journalism School, given to the university as a good will gesture by China's Minister of Industry in 1931 "after he became acquainted with journalism alumni working in China." Thomas Jefferson's tombstone resides on the quad because the university's curriculum and concept of higher education were modeled after Jefferson's University of Virginia. One story added, "the University of Virginia wanted to borrow the monument for a bicentennial celebration, but we were afraid to part with it."

Part of the university's legacy includes stories of famous people associated with it, such as President Harry S. Truman, the namesake of its cuddly mascot Truman the Tiger, Thomas Edison, and Hillary Rodham Clinton. The story of Eleanor Roosevelt's stay at the Chancellor's residence on the quad includes details of her untimely nap:

> She came to the University in 1959 to fulfill a speaking engagement, and

a reception was to be held in her honor at what is now the Chancellor's Residence. Before the guests were to arrive, the former first lady went upstairs to bathe and relax. After turning on the tub water, she removed her hearing aid and lay down to rest for just a bit--a bit too long. Downstairs the guests had arrived and were growing impatient. Only after water overflowing from the bathtub began dribbling down the stairway did someone find the courage to check on Mrs. Roosevelt.

Other stories concern the traditions of organizations. The Marching Band has a history stretching back to 1908 including bowl appearances ranging from the Orange to the Sun Bowl. Engineers are influential enough on campus to have the administration building's dome shine green during Engineer's Week in honor of their patron saint, St. Patrick. Omicron Delta Kappa is a national leadership honor society, with traditions specific to the university.

Of course, not all of the stories are serious. Myths enliven an institution, and the university is not lacking in that area. "A myth told at Summer Welcome says that if you rub the nose of David Francis's statue you will get a 4.0 that semester. The statue is located in front of Jesse Hall." Such a myth still supports the academic traditions of the university.

Student Subculture

A large set of stories at the university exemplifies a strong student subculture. This group of stories illustrates the antithesis of the conservative traditions of the university. These stories primarily focus on partying, the supernatural, danger and pranks.

The most prevalent set of these stories are about the university's dubious reputation as the one of the nation's premiere party schools. According to one story, Playboy did not include the university in its rankings

of party schools because the students were professionals, not amateurs. Its party scene is said to have been the basis for the movie "Animal House."

Many of the party stories are related to the Greek system. A typical example, The Pike Pelt, is a popular fraternity story that clearly demonstrates students' desire to have fun and party for almost any reason:

> The "Pike Pelt" began many years ago and still continues today. The first snow of the school year, the fraternity known as Alpha Tau Omega plans all day for a snow ball fight against the fraternity Pi Kappa Alpha. Both the fraternities build extensive shields, snow bombs and other war-like paraphernalia for that one evening. It usually starts about eleven o'clock and continues way into the early morning. The Pikes anxiously await the first throwing of the snow ball; ready to retaliate. The fun continues for a while, till other fraternities (who are supposed to be allies of the Pikes) join in. Then the fighting breaks out, the police are usually called, property is destroyed and the whole Greek community is up in arms. After all the madness has ceased, the "fun" finally begins again. People streak, prank call other houses and sometimes drink till they pass out. (At least they're not hurting anyone!) It's part of a tradition in the Greek community and will probably continue for many years to come.

In opposition to the science and logic of the dominant culture, there is a supernatural aspect to the student subculture. Stories of ghosts and spirits inhabiting many sorority and fraternity houses are common. A famous one, about renegade Bill Anderson, even links the town's Civil War history with current "hauntings" at university fraternity and sorority houses. According to the story, Anderson led a group of violent rebel soldiers:

> The men of Columbia decided to form a group themselves to ride out and kill Bloody Bill before he reached them and did any harm. They rode out, found Bill and his men, shot him and took him to the nearest hospital, which is now the Sigma Alpha Epsilon fraternity house, to put him in the morgue.

As the story goes, Bill was not completely dead when he was placed there although "he died in that room trying to get out. This is why his soul still roams the Andersonville Room (and sometimes others) at the Sigma Alpha Epsilon house to this day."

There are also stories of the dangers and risks of student life unrelated to the supernatural. Threatening figures are part of the folklore of residence hall life. One version starts out "About twenty years ago" and another begins, "In the early 1990's," demonstrating the pervading nature of this tale about two roommates. One roommate went out partying for the evening, leaving the other to study and sleep. She returned partway through the night to get an umbrella or change of clothing (depending on the version), but did not turn on the light to avoid waking the roommate.

> After spending the night at someone else's house, the girl got up and went back to her dorm room the next morning to find her roommate stabbed to death. Written on the wall in blood was the horrifying phrase, "Aren't you glad you didn't turn on the light."

Other forms of danger in college life are less mysterious, but can be equally frightening as the unknown intruder. An example from these stories concerns the student health center, known as "Student Death." One story relates: "I know a girl who went to her doctor back home and found out she had bronchitis. Student Death diagnosed her as having stress."

Pranks are an all-time college favorite. There are stories of pranks by sports fans, members of the resident life staff, writers for the school newspaper, and of course, pranks pulled on professors. A number of the best known prank stories involve the bell atop the school's oldest building, Switzler Hall. The bell used to ring at every class period. But when the football team won against the Texas Grid in 1908, students got the idea to climb up the bell tower and grease the clapper, so that classes would be disrupted without the timely bell chimes. Nonetheless, classes continued. At other times students pulled bell pranks by putting knots in the rope or taking the rope. A locked, trap door leading to the bell tower eventually put a stop to these pranks, along with the policy (according to rumor) that the Switzler Bell rings only upon the death of a member of the university community.

Not all student subculture stories are completely contrary to the university's dominant culture. One aspect of the student subculture is the philanthropic activities in which the students are involved. An example is SOAR, an organization that local boys and girls join while waiting for a match in the Big Brother/Big Sister organization. "Freshman Jenny Pierson is volunteering in SOAR for her second semester. She said she and a friend heard about the program through their residence hall." In SOAR, students can be involved without making too big of a time commitment.

Clash of Cultures

The obvious conflict between the values of the dominant culture of traditions and those of the student subculture appears in many of the stories. A series of stories covering several decades illustrates the ongoing conflict.

The Patty Murphy story has more the aura of a legend because it happened in another era: Prohibition. As the story goes, one fraternity flagrantly

enjoyed alcohol at their house and even had their own distillery in the back lot. They learned of an imminent police raid minutes before it occurred. One fraternity member, Patty Murphy, valiantly drank the stock while the others distracted the police. In the process, Murphy died of alcohol poisoning and was buried in the back yard. The story is acted out yearly:

> Every year the fraternity has a "Patty Murphy" party to remember him. They choose one member of the fraternity to portray "Patty" and they ask girls to sort of campaign to be the "widow murphy."

In the same spirit of students defying the university, there are stories about a famous place on campus, The Shack. A pub that physically lived down to its name, the Shack was located in a prime, eye-sore location just across from the main administration building from around World War II until the 1980's. Students embraced the spirits and sense of comraderie at the Shack. Heightening the legendary status of the Shack is a now famous alumni, Mort Walker, the cartoonist who created Beetle Bailey. Apparently Walker conceived of Beetle Bailey during his extended visits to the Shack. The Shack was so convenient that it was easily the most popular gathering place for many students and equally irksome to the administration.

> The shack was painted all white. It was by no means a fancy place. You entered the establishment through a swinging door. Inside there was a large tree, booths and benches that had been written and carved all over, and a dirt floor.....It was known for serving minors. But even if you were not looking for that sort of refreshment, one could still go to "the Shack" to hang out with their friends and order the famous "Shack Burger" to fill their stomachs.
>
> Finally, in the 80's, the Shack mysteriously burned down. It is rumored

that the administration had a hand in this, as they were planning to build the new alumni center which now stands on the former Shack location. The stories end with something of a truce between cultures since The Shack is remembered by a small green area with benches, one of which holds a bronze statue of Beetle Bailey, a tribute to the now-famous cartoonist. This is, at least from the administration's perspective, a far more fitting landscape for the nearby law school and alumni center.

During the 90's, stories about one event are significant as a turning point in the conflict between the dominant culture and the student subculture. The day that the sororities and fraternities offered bids to new members traditionally was celebrated with a "Bid Day Bash." This party took place in "Greek Town" where most of the houses are, and encompassed all who cared to participate. Historically, streets to Greek Town were blocked off and kegs of beer were everywhere. Supposedly, the police and administration tolerated these infractions. This all changed on Bid Day in 1990.

> The event began when the crowd became out of control. It was composed of Greeks, independent students, people from other schools and towns and high school students. The hosting fraternity had no way of controlling the party....Amidst all the hoopla and celebration of this particular year's bash, one individual, of an altered state of mind, climbed a telephone pole. In doing so he managed to touch one of the wires and electrocute himself. It was soon discovered that this young man was indeed young. He was still in high school. The boy lived, but the end of Bid Day Bash celebration was imminent.

In the student newspaper two days later, the Chancellor was quoted as saying, "I think we've seen the last of Bid Day Bash." And not long after that, a new

era began. From that point on, the University has moved toward becoming a "dry" (alcohol free) campus, and as each year passed, the school's hey day of party life has melded further into the past.

While the administration undoubtedly appears to be winning the war between cultures with the end of the Shack and Bid Day Bash, other skirmishes are always on the horizon. Even though drinking in the dorms is strictly prohibited, the story is told of an intoxicated student who stepped out of a stalled elevator and fell to his death in the shaft. In another story, students tried to outwit a Spanish professor by stealing a test and then retreating to their fraternity. They were eventually caught. None the less, because this involved outright theft with a number of accomplices, the story lives in memories as an example of students against teachers and the whole system. Other infractions include students scalping the school's basketball tickets. This story concerns the administration, represented by the athletic director, trying to give students ticket privileges, and fraternity members taking advantage of that by reselling them. Given that stories of the conflicts between these cultures cover a span of over 70 years, it seems unlikely that the conflict will ever come to an end.

Conflict Over Espoused Values

While the previous stories show conflict between the student subculture and the university traditions, a second set of conflict stories points to instances in which individuals, often students, are in conflict with the university for its failure to adhere to its stated values and traditions. These stories are told concerning the university's failure to be a paragon of equality and fairness in which student education is of highest value. Perhaps the most famous story concerns the university's encounter with its first

African-American student. The year was 1936 and the prevailing policy was separate but equal educational facilities. A black man, Lloyd Gaines, wanted to attend law school. While a law school was being built at the state's only black institution, he was denied entrance to this university. The Supreme Court eventually declared that Gaines must attend this university. "Unfortunately, Gaines never attended the School of Law. The case came to a very quiet, eerie end in December of 1939 when Gaines' attorneys were unable to determine his whereabouts and the case was dismissed." He was never found.

Another story demonstrates students forcing the administration to create an equitable environment. Apparently in the 70's, the school's natatorium was used by men and women, but only the men were provided with a locker room and towels. A mixed group of students formed "Women for Equal Towels" (W.E.T.) and went to the Chancellor to protest the situation. "After some time, the Chancellor hadn't actively pursued this ordeal, so W.E.T. decided to take this case to a federal level, for it was clearly discriminatory." After this, the Chancellor "opened his eyes to the situation and did something about it." A new locker room for women and fresh towels for everyone followed. Stories like these suggest that students and student organizations, including its independent newspaper, must serve as watchdogs over the administration to make sure it practices its espoused values.

Unifying

While a significant number of stories demonstrate the conflict between the dominant culture and the student subculture, there are a number of stories that symbolize unity between students and administration. The homecoming tradition, which originated at the university according to stories and public relations releases, provides one such example. Several stories centered on

the first homecoming when the university and its main rival were scheduled to play at home for the first time in twenty-one years. "To arouse support for the Tigers, Chester Brewer, Director of Athletics. . .urged fans, alumni, and former. . .athletes to 'Come Home' for the big game." And come home they did. All the area hotels were filled and the train made special trips to accommodate all the alumni. The celebrations of parades, singing the school song, and torch lights were original to the university, although now commonly imitated. While homecoming epitomizes the student subculture with missed classes, drinking, and late night partying, everyone, including alumni, takes pride in knowing that the university originated this tradition.

Frequently, the unifying stories involve conflict with some outside opponent or force. When this happens, such as during sporting events, the disparate administration and student cultures come together. The university has a history of odd occurrences and bad breaks in men's sports, at least. As one story goes, an opposing team scored at the end of a game by taking an extra down, which was not called by the referees. The crowd was outraged, particularly because the university was leading in the game and their season up to that point had been a losing one. This miscue also allowed the opposing team to go on to an undefeated, national championship. Any mention of the verbal symbol, "fifth down" in either the dominant or student subculture triggers the same painful knowledge that we were cheated out of a victory.

War time also served the same unifying function. After World War I students joined forces with the administration to collect money to honor the 114 students killed in the war. Memorial Union, one of the dominant structures on campus, was the result. The building was later rededicated to those lost in World War II.

Fragmentation

A number of stories are not clearly classifiable into either the dominant culture or student sub-culture or the interaction between them. Often the messages of these stories are ambiguous because they seem to present apparently conflicting values without clearly favoring one over the other.

One such story concerns favoritism to athletes. One story reports that the basketball coach has such pull that if you are a talented player, there will be no problem with your grades. "The rumors also state that [this coach] and the basketball program get whatever they need or wish to have." This could be seen as an example of the university failing to follow its espoused values, since the story suggests that athletes take precedence over education. However, the story does not make clear if anything should be done to correct the problem, particularly since it involves the university's only winning tradition in athletics.

Influence from outside environments can also produce or lead to an ambiguous alliance or situation. An example of this took place after an innocuous, annual fraternity stunt of "stealing" a sorority composite picture. It is always returned later with perhaps some removable embellishments. But this time the campus police caught the young men red-handed and arrested him.

> Fortunately for the individual in question a wealthy alumnist of the University happened to be in town that weekend to give a rather large sum of money to the university. He had been told of the composite incident by our faculty advisor, a close friend of his. Mr. Walton was scheduled to meet with the chancellor and other university officials to formally give his donation. Before that meeting began, however, he pulled the chancellor aside. "I've got a rather large check with me,

but it's not made out to anyone in particular," he said. "And I hear one of my fraternity brothers is in trouble. I sure hope I don't have to use it for legal fees." A day later the charges were dropped and the University was several dollars richer.

The story seems to juxtapose the university being influenced by the alumnist instead of abiding by their values, with the university's support from high-profile, successful people. Given the pettiness of the "crime," it is not clear what, if anything, should have been done.

Some of these stories are sub-texts of other, more clear-cut stories. For example, in one version of Bid Day Bash, there was a conflict between racial groups on the front lawn of a fraternity house. In another story, the aura of Jesse Hall, an exemplar of University tradition, is slightly tarnished by Carl, a night janitor, who was known to drink a bottle of whiskey after his shift and then toss it down into a shoot to the basement in the morning, making strange noises heard by the morning shift workers the next day.

As for Carl, no one knows what happened to him. Some say that he is still at Jesse Hall and you can see him staring out of the dome windows at night. Others say that he moved to Florida and died a rich man. But, if he moved to Florida, why do you still hear bottles being dropped every morning as the first shift of employees comes in?

The university's academic tradition is often thought to be represented by the six Ionic columns that stand at the center of Francis Quadrangle because they are all that remain of the old Academic Hall that was destroyed by fire on January 9, 1892. The columns are the sight of the "Tiger Walk," when the entering freshman class walk through the columns toward Jesse Hall, symbolizing their entrance into the university. A sub-text story notes:

> Many myths surround the columns including that the architect placed two further apart for his own amusement. Ivy used to grow on five of the six columns. It is believed that during the Civil War two soldiers fought over the love of a woman; one was shot at the base of that column, therefore no ivy would ever grow on it.

Here there is no clear espoused value. The story is either evidence of a fragmented culture or simply an amusing, frequently told story.

Discussion

This research examines an organization's cultural stories to determine if the stories support all three of Martin's (1992) views of culture: an integrated culture characterized by unity, a differentiated culture consisting of subcultures, and a fragmented culture characterized by ambiguity. All three perspectives are evident in this analysis of a university's stories. There are stories that are part of the dominant culture that values tradition and education. At the same time, stories reflect a strong student subculture that is often the antithesis of the dominant culture. Various stories deal with the conflict between these cultures or their unity against outside opposition. Finally, a few stories suggest a fragmented view in which values are unclear or changing.

Martin presents the three perspectives as alternative or competing perspectives on organizational culture. These results suggest that the perspectives compliment or supplement each other, rather than compete with each other. Combining the three perspectives provided a richer, more complete understanding of this organization's culture. By using multiple perspectives, the dominant values, the subcultures, the interaction of subcultures, and the areas of ambiguity were discovered. The synthesis of perspectives provides a

better understanding of an organization's culture than any single approach. Applying multiple perspectives appears to be valuable whether the focus is on a particular artifact, set of artifacts, or a more general examination of the culture.

Unlike the electronics firm studied by Martin (1992), this organization has a relatively long history (over 150 years). It is surprising to note that even with the very fluid membership over the years as students (and faculty) come and go, certain cultural values remain quite consistent (Schein, 1990). In some instances, stories illustrate the same cultural phenomenon through a series of stories that come from different decades. This is particularly evident in the conflict between the student subculture with its emphasis on partying and using alcohol and the dominant culture. The Paddy Murphy story originates during Prohibition. The Shack stories cover the 40's to the 80's. The Bid Day Bash story comes from 1990. Students are currently resisting a move toward making the university a dry campus. In this way, the same cultural conflict is suggested as having a long history in this organization. It is as if the differentiated culture has been institutionalized as part of the organization's culture.

This research illustrates how organizational stories provide members with a means to understand current or future events. The infamous "fifth down" story not only recalls the past, but also provides a framework for understanding another extraordinary football game this past fall. As time expired, an opposing team member kicked (illegally) a loose ball up to a teammate to tie the game, leading to an overtime loss for the university and another national championship for the opposing team. The stories of the past provide organizational members with a means to interpret this event.

This research demonstrates the importance of examining organizational stories as cultural artifacts, since the same objects are used to support many different, even opposing, cultural themes. The university's Ionic columns represent the original campus building and are aligned with a set of columns from the old courthouse several blocks away. They are the epitome of the dominant culture. At the same time, a student columns story suggests that a new column grows every time a virgin graduates, making them a symbol of the student subculture. Apparently, any group within an organization can appropriate an artifact for its own use. Another columns story suggests that no ivy could grow on one column because the former university president buried under it was an atheist. There is ambiguity about whether the former president was actually an atheist and if (and why) he was buried there. The story does not seem to espouse the values of any part of the organization. So even though these stories concern the same objects, they can support either an integrated, differentiated, or fragmented view of the organization's culture.

Certainly a university is a somewhat unique organization compared to the typically studied, for-profit business or government agency. However, there appear to be some important implications that could be explored in research on organizational culture in other settings through the examination of stories. In this university there is a dominant, tradition-based culture that is in sharp contrast with the student subculture. Similar, disparate stories representing conflicting cultures occur in other organizations. For example, Pacanowsky & O'Donnell-Trujillo (1983) distinguish corporate narratives that espouse management's ideology from collegial ones that may present alternative perspectives. Martin and Siehl (1983) found the same story was interpreted differently by different subcultures within the same organization. The

"refrigerator story," in which local managers went to extreme lengths to ensure that a visiting executive from Detroit had a refrigerator with beer and food in his motel room, represented a dominant corporate value of deference to authority at GM at the time. However, members of the John DeLoreon subculture told the story to mock the values of the dominant culture.

Examining the stories of a prominent subculture may lead to a better understanding of an organization's overall culture. The stories at this university emphasize its party life. The student subcultures at other universities emphasize different issues. One of us attended a university where students repeatedly told about the high suicide rate and high rate of transfers to other schools. Subculture stories may create and recreate an unsatisfactory culture that has little to do with the espoused values of the dominant culture. Similar subculture stories may undermine the efforts of upper management to influence the cultures of their organizations.

Further examination of stories showing conflict and unity in other organizations may also provide insight into the interaction of subcultures. For example, in an organization with clear differentiation between upper and lower management or between management and union members, it seems likely that each group would have its own stories to embody its values and beliefs about itself and the opposing group. This research suggests that there could be stories, perhaps told by both groups, that would demonstrate the conflict between their values, as well as stories that would unify the two sides against an outside nemesis. For example, there may be negotiation stories that attempt to show the opposing group as untrustworthy. At the same time, there may be stories of a united effort to beat the competition by getting to the marketplace sooner or with a higher quality product. Examining the

stories of conflict and unity between the subcultures within an organization could help to understand the culture as both integrated and differentiated.

There are also stories in which various people attempt to force the university to maintain its espoused values. Most likely, these are not unique to this organization. In other organizations, there are likely stories of some "little person," perhaps an organizational member or outside constituent, who stands up to the organization and forces it to be accountable. The telling of these "whistle-blowing" stories, besides making heroes (or villains) of individuals, may demonstrate the importance of monitoring organizations or ignoring certain discrepancies. At the same time, they may empower individuals by making them aware that they can make a difference.

Further examination of the fragmented view is also suggested. The majority of narrative analyses of organizational stories seem to focus on examining stories that support an integrated view of culture. But, stories sometimes represent ambiguous or conflicting values without a clear resolution for the recipient of the story. These fragmented stories may provide employees with a means to blow off steam or deal with uncertainty. However, these ambiguous stories could also be problematic for organizational newcomers who are still learning the culture. If a story is told of an employee using unethical practices to make a successful sale and suffering only minor consequences, the newcomer may be uncertain about accepted practice. Examining how these ambiguous and equivocal stories are interpreted by employees of different tenure or how the interpretation of the stories changes over time may provide additional insights into understanding how a culture is created, maintained, or changed.

Limitations

While the analysis of this university's stories has provided useful insight into its culture and the study of organizational culture in general, there are a number of limitations. The stories were primarily known by students, but included a few public relations pieces. Because of this, the set of stories is probably not an exhaustive compilation of the university's stories. There may be other stories suggestive of other themes or values. In addition, the relative importance of the stories is not clear. Some stories, particularly those concerning recent events, may not become part of the organization's long-term, collective memory. However, it appears that the most common stories are included because they represent the most important aspects of the university: the institutional heritage, the student experience, and the interaction between the two.

The stories are apparently not historically accurate. There are verifiable inaccuracies. For example, a building built after the Civil War could not have been a hospital during that war. There are contradictions. In some versions of the Bid Day Bash, the high school student dies, while he lives in others. Perhaps others are urban or university myths that cross organizational boundaries. The stories are a flexible means for interpreting events rather than historical facts like buildings and monuments. Despite these problems, it is the telling of the stories, the performing of the culture, that is important (Pacanowsky & O'Donnell-Trujillo, 1983). The telling of stories provides organizational members with abbreviated means of understanding the culture and its values (Meyer, 1995), regardless of the accuracy of the stories.

Conclusion

This examination of one university's culture through an analysis of its

stories demonstrated that a dominant culture based on education and tradition was frequently at odds with a strong student subculture. Other stories showed the two uniting in opposition to an outside enemy. Additional stories illustrated the need to hold the university to its espoused values. At the same time, there were stories with ambiguous or conflicting messages. By understanding these stories as representative of integrated, differentiated, and fragmented views of culture, a more comprehensive understanding of the university's culture was achieved. The analysis of other organizations' cultures may be enhanced by taking a similar approach.

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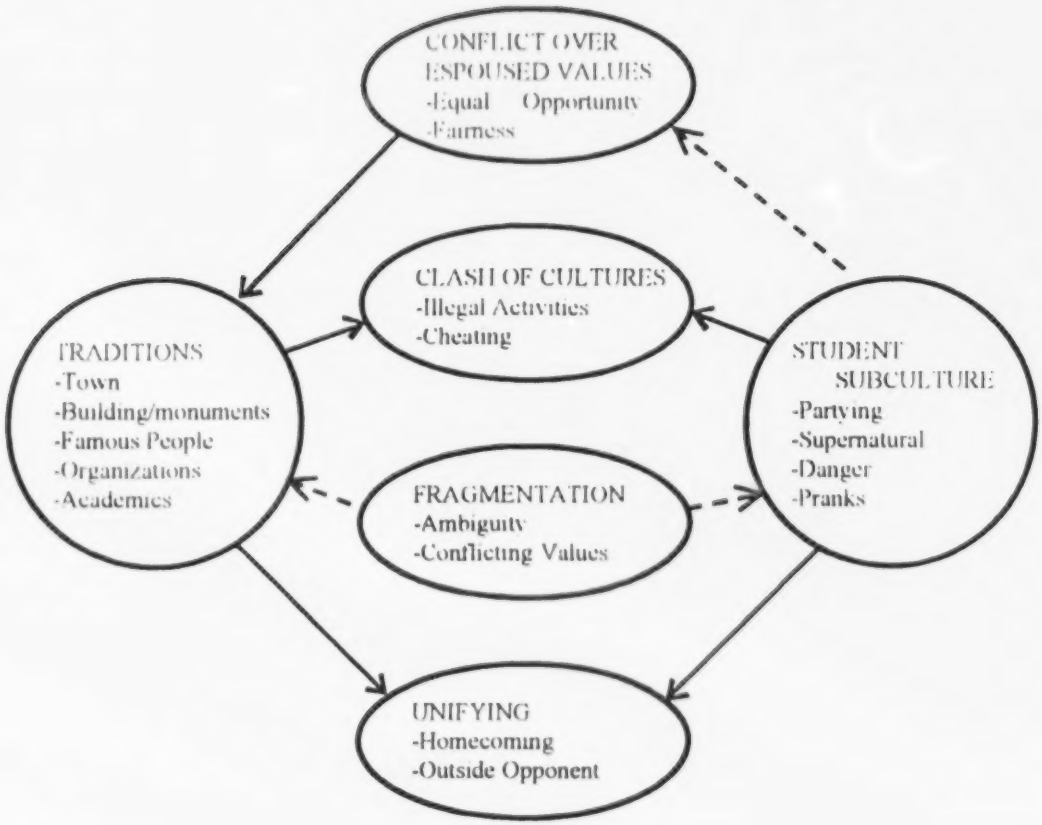

Figure 1: The Typology of Organizational Stories

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